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ABSTRACT

This paper examines teachers' attitudes toward issues central to the establishment and functioning of professional development schools in Jefferson County, Kentucky. These issues are teacher effectiveness and teacher empowerment. Like the professional development school concept itself, the research reported is collaborative. Both quantitative and qualitative approaches were used to gain a more complete picture of the day-to-day life in the professional development schools. In reporting results, both research and school-reform concerns are addressed in an effort to enhance "research conversations" within schools and between schools and universities. In the first part of the paper, the collaborative context within which professional development schools have emerged is considered. The second part examines some of the findings of a survey of the 1,065 teachers and 85 administrators in the 24 participating schools, focusing on their responses to questions related to teacher efficacy and empowerment; the response rate was 93.6%. Section three presents related evaluative data derived from participant observation in their schools and interviews with staff members. Finally, consideration is given to the implications of the research findings for school-university collaboration. (JD)

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QUANTITATIVE AND QUALITATIVE PERSPECTIVES ON TEACHER ATTITUDES IN PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT SCHOOLS*

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INTRODUCTION

The purpose of the present paper is to examine teachers' attitudes toward issues central to the establishment and functioning of professional development schools in Jefferson County, Kentucky. Like the professional development school concept itself, the research reported here is collaborative. We have used both quantitative and qualitative approaches to gain a more complete picture of day-to-day life in the professional development schools. And, in reporting results, we have addressed both research and school-reform concerns in an effort to enhance "research conversations" within schools and between schools and universities.

The paper is composed of several parts. First, we consider the collaborative context within which professional development schools have emerged. Second, we examine some of the findings of a survey of the teachers and administrators in these schools, focusing on their responses to questions related to teacher efficacy and empowerment. Third, we present related qualitative

*The authors wish to express appreciation to Donna Gaus, Wayne Childers,and Melodie Wagner for their conduct of interviews to support the ethnographic section of this paper. In addition, we acknowledge the contribution of Linda G. Shelor, Jefferson County (Kentucky) Public Schools, to the interpretation of the interview data.

data derived from participant observation in these schools and interviews with staff members. Finally, we consider implications of the research findings for school-university collaboration.

THE COLLABORATIVE CONTEXT

Context provides the lens through which we must view the initiative to establish professional development schools in the Jefferson County Public Schools (JCPS). And this context is one of school/university/community collaboration. There is no definitive starting point for the collaboration. As was brought home in the compilation of the University of Louisville School of Education's history (Egginton and Childers, 1988), close ties to the school system and the community have been present for many years. For purposes of this paper, however, we will arbitrarily begin with the establishment of the JCPS/Gheens Professional Development Academy in 1983.

Through a grant from The Gheens Foundation, the JCPS/Gheens Academy was developed within the school system to focus on connections between professional development and school restructuring. The School of Education's dean, Raphael Nystrand, participated in the search for an executive director of the Gheens Academy, culminating in the selection of Phillip C. Schlechty, and pledged support for the school system's innovative initiative through the allocation of faculty time to planning and implementation activities.

Nine School of Education faculty members participated in initial planning related to the professional development school

concept and other Gheens activities. Two of the most active faculty members applied in 1985 for a grant from the Office of Educational Research and Improvement to support the preparation of school principals to become teacher educators and leaders of teachers (who are themselves seen as leaders) in the professional development school sites (Whitford and Hovda, 1985). These faculty members received support for three years, and their work became an integral part of the effort to establish operating professional development school sites.

Twenty-four school faculties elected by majority vote to become professional development school planning sites in November 1986. Planning teams, elected at each site, met throughout the spring of 1987 to study issues related to school restructuring, teacher education, the teaching occupation, and links among research, theory, and practice. University faculty members and central office administrators also participated in this effort.

From the outset, discussion was guided by a consideration of the two purposes posited for professional development schools: they would serve as exemplars of practice and as induction centers for teachers and administrators. By the summer of 1987, the professional development school planning team had in hand a document representing consensus on vision, beliefs, and standards of practice that could guide restructuring efforts at individual sites.

Building on the collaborative work with the Gheens Academy, the School of Education applied in 1987 to the Kentucky Council

on Higher Education to be designated one of five statewide centers of excellence. The funding of that proposal has resulted in the establishment of the Center for the Collaborative Advancement of the Teaching Profession, which works closely with the Gheens Academy to plan and coordinate all collaborative efforts between the two institutions. The Executive Director of the Gheens Academy serves as a co-director with Dean Raphael Nystrand, and two Gheens staff members serve on the Steering Committee, which meets every two weeks.

The proposal to establish the Center of Excellence included as a primary goal the allocation of resources to support the professional development school program. Thus, specific faculty members are assigned to spend a significant portion of their time in professional development schoools working with administrators, teachers, and teacher education students to help realize the goals of the local school plan for restructuring. An effort is also made to place the majority of the School of Education's student teachers in particular professional development schools to increase the concentration of resources and to offer better coordinated clinical opportunities. University commitment to the professional development school program has grown each year; since 1987, the number of university personnel involved in one or more of the 24 PDS sites has more than doubled.

THE SURVEY

As part of ongoing research on the professional development schools, the 1065 teachers and 85 administrative staff employed

in these schools were asked to participate in a questionnaire survey. The survey, containing 87 closed-ended questions and seven open-ended questions, was administered in late spring, 1988. The response rate was 93.6%.

Efficacy Questions

Three questions focused on teachers' sense of efficacy. Respondents were asked to indicate the extent of their agreement with each of the following statements:

1. When it comes right down to it, a teacher really can't do much because most of a student's motivation and performance depends on his or her home environment.

2. If I really try hard, I can get through to even the most difficult or unmotivated students.

3. Teachers in my school feel that nothing they do makes any difference with regard to achievement in my school.

These three questions attempt to tap three rather different notions of efficacy. The first item, which assesses respondents' belief in teachers' ability to promote student learning in the face of environmental obstacles, addresses a very specific aspect of efficacy, student learning outcomes. The second item assesses respondents' belief in their own ability--that is, their personal effectiveness as teachers. And the third item, which assesses respondents' beliefs in the ability of other teachers in their school to make a difference, is concerned with a generalized notion of teacher effectiveness as an indication of school climate.

Although the first two items have been used together as a measure of efficacy (Berman, McLaughlin, Bass, Pauly, & Zellman,

1977), it is doubtful that responses are merely additive. As Ashton (1985) has argued, these questions reflect different dimensions of this elusive concept. Thus, a teacher may feel that teachers in general can make a difference in student learning outcomes but not feel that he or she personally is very effective as a teacher. Similarly, the third item, tapping as it does yet another notion of efficacy, is not necessarily related directly to either of the first two items. For example, a teacher may be confident in his or her own effectiveness but feel less confident in the abilities of other teachers in the school.

Empowerment Questions

Seventeen questions in the survey focused on teachers' sense of empowerment. For the first 10 of these questions, teachers were asked to indicate the extent of their influence over matters such as instructional methods in the classroom, reporting student progress to parents, time and content of faculty meetings, selecting student teachers, and evaluating full-time teachers. These questions assess empowerment in the sense of influence.

For the last seven questions, teachers were asked to indicate the extent of their agreement with statements about the role of teachers in decisionmaking. These statements included issues such as having adequate time for shared decisionmaking, involving the majority of faculty in making decisions, recognizing successful faculty performance, and developing indicators of successful faculty performance. These questions assess empowerment in the sense of decisionmaking.

SURVEY RESULTS

Efficacy Questions

The survey results reveal that respondents express a stronger belief in teacher effectiveness than they do in their own personal effectiveness or in effecting student learning outcomes. These differences among the three items hold true for both men and women and for all levels of schooling (i.e., elementary, middle, and secondary). That is, respondents feel less confident about specific manifestations of efficacy (with which presumably they are more familiar) than about the more generalized notion of efficacious teachers (with which presumably they are less familiar, given the pervasive fact of self-contained classrooms and little opportunity to observe other teachers in action).

For each of the three efficacy questions, women generally express a stronger sense of efficacy than do men; and elementary teachers express a stronger sense of efficacy than do middle school teachers, who in turn express a stronger sense than do secondary teachers. These differences are perhaps best understood in light of two factors. First, many of the women respondents are teachers in elementary school, at which level teachers in general express greater confidence. Second, the realities of teaching would suggest that, at each successive level of schooling, problems of student discipline and performance intensify, thereby reducing a sense of efficacy.

Finally, interestingly--but not surprisingly--administrators consistently report that teachers have a greater sense of

efficacy than do the teachers themselves. It can be argued that administrators are of necessity more positive than those they lead. If they are not, they are not doing their job.

Empowerment Questions

In the case of empowerment, teachers report the greatest influence over matters such as instructional methods, standards of pupil behavior, reporting student progress to parents, and evaluating student teachers--that is, influence over matters largely confined to the classroom itself. Teachers report the least influence over evaluating teachers and selecting (as opposed to evaluating) student teachers, areas in which traditionally teachers have had little influence. In addition, teachers express relatively low agreement with statements about decisionmaking, especially developing indicators of faculty performance, having adequate time to promote shared decisionmaking, and having the majority of faculty involved in decisionmaking. Again, administrators believe that teachers have greater power than teachers themselves report.

Men generally express a greater sense of empowerment than do women, especially as regards decisionmaking. Middle school teachers express a higher sense of empowerment, in terms of both influence and decisionmaking, than do elementary teachers, who in turn express a somewhat higher sense of empowerment than do secondary teachers.

The differences by level (somewhat different from those discussed above for efficacy) are particularly important. Middle

school teachers in the district, even prior to the advent of professional development schools, have had extensive experience with interdisciplinary teaming. Most middle schools in the district are organized into interdisciplinary teams in which typically 4 or 5 teachers work with the same 120-150 students during blocks of time that can be scheduled flexibly. The teachers on a team also share at least one planning period daily, and in some cases they share two such blocks of time for at least part of the year. Most teams meet together at least once a week during the common planning time. (While some of the high schools and the elementary schools in the sample are experimenting with teaming arrangements, none of those schools is completely organized into teams.) Teaming is likely to contribute to teachers' sense of empowerment because of the expanded role of teachers within each team in making a wide range of decisions.

Efficacy-Empowerment Relationships

In comparing responses to the efficacy and empowerment questions, several relationships emerge. First, respondents who express a strong sense of efficacy in terms of student outcomes (the first efficacy item) also express a strong sense of empowerment in terms of influence. This relationship is stronger for women than for men and for middle school teachers than for elementary or secondary teachers. Once again, the likely reasons for these differences stem from two facts discussed above: women respondents in large numbers teach at the elementary level, where student problems are less intense; and middle school teachers

have had the benefit of experience with teaming and its concomitant increase in a sense of empowerment.

Second, respondents who express a strong sense of personal effectiveness as a teacher (the second efficacy item) also express a strong sense of empowerment in terms of decision-making. This relationship is stronger for men and for middle school teachers. Sex differences here are somewhat puzzling. It is possible that men express a strong sense of decisionmaking power in part because traditionally men teachers have more often been consulted on school matters and because, in the present sample, men teachers tend to have more teaching experience and have attained higher degrees. As regards level differences, again teaming is likely to be a factor.

Third, respondents who express a strong sense of general teacher effectiveness (the third efficacy item) also express a strong sense of empowerment in terms of decisionmaking. Again, this relationship is stronger for men and for middle school teachers. Sex differences and level differences are again probably due in part to the factors discussed above. Level differences, however, may also reflect an additional feature of teaming--the fact that teachers in teams have greater opportunity to observe other teachers than do teachers in traditional self-contained classrooms.

Summary

While both sex and level differences emerge in the analysis of the survey data, level differences appear to be particularly

important, especially in examining the relationship between efficacy and empowerment. The link between efficacy and empowerment, particularly as mediated by teachers' experience with teaming, invites additional investigation, a qualitative approach to which we now consider.

THE INTERVIEWS

In an effort to gain a better understanding of how the issues of empowerment and efficacy are played out in the day-to-day activities of the survey respondents, teachers and administrators were selected from six of the twenty-four schools surveyed for follow-up interviews. The six schools were deliberately selected because of their favorable responses to the efficacy and empowerment questions. That is, we selected schools which are in a sense "exemplars" of practice to better appreciate the conditions under which successful practice occurs.

Individual and small-group interviews were conducted by a team of six interviewers. Each respondent was asked four questions about efficacy: revised forms of the three efficacy questions addressed in the survey and a question relating to the specific survey results from his or her school. As regards empowerment, each respondent was also asked about changes in teachers' involvement in decisionmaking at the school, teachers' impact on decisionmaking, and respondents' perceptions of the advantages and disadvantages resulting from increased teacher involvement in decisionmaking. Additional questions concerned the possible relationship between efficacy and empowerment, the

consistent gap between administrators' and teachers' responses noted in the survey results, and the effects of recent restructuring efforts on commitment to teaching and to the field of education.

INTERVIEW RESULTS

Several themes emerged from the interviews: 1) the direct relationship between teachers' involvement in decisionmaking and their subsequent feelings of efficacy, 2) the importance of teaming in facilitating both increased teacher involvement in decisionmaking and increased feelings of efficacy, and 3) the importance of having a supportive faculty and administration as a basis for restructuring efforts.

Efficacy-empowerment relationships

When asked, "Do you think there is a relationship between teachers' sense of efficacy and the degree of shared decision-making at your school," most respondents said yes. Both teachers and administrators feel that increased involvement in decisionmaking results in increased feelings of efficacy. Many respondents recognize that there will always be a group of teachers who are internally motivated and feel effective regardless of whether or not they are involved in decision-making. At the same time, however, respondents also indicate that most teachers need to be involved in the decisionmaking process in order to feel effective. As one teacher indicated, "Satisfied teachers are those who have input and see the results of that input." In other words, assuming responsibility for

decisionmaking motivates teachers to work harder to "make things go."

According to both teachers and administrators, increased involvement in making decisions about issues such as discipline, counseling, professional development, and scheduling builds a sense of ownership, trust, and professionalism. One teacher summed up these thoughts when she stated, "When you have a choice in determining the path, you are more confident about where you are going."

Teachers do, however, identify problems with increased involvement in decisionmaking. For example, respondents indicate that increased involvement requires additional time, better time management, and a strong staff. And it can often be frustrating when "close-minded individuals" who "want their own way" prevent others from reaching consensus. Moreover, increased involvement requires a "principal who is willing to let other people help or assume power."

Finally, several teachers raised an additional issue that is not always considered--"Some teachers fear being empowered. Some of us find [empowerment] exciting, but there are others who don't want any part of the responsibility. Empowerment is a responsibility."

Teaming

In discussing feelings of efficacy and empowerment, respondents indicate that teaming provides an important structure for nurturing a sense of efficacy and empowerment. This finding,

in particular, corroborates the link suggested in the survey analysis between teaming and both efficacy and empowerment. According to one middle school teacher:

> If the teams are functioning well, the teams are making decisions they can live with. If they are happy with what they are doing and they are making decisions they can live with as a team, then naturally they are going to feel it's making a difference with student success and their own efficacy. And that doesn't mean they have to do it at the building level or district level to feel that. If they can, within their own team, make [decisions such as] move Johnny when he needs moving or plan a field trip that they particularly want to do or keep kids two hours to see a movie they really want kids to see, then there is a lot of shared decisionmaking. That makes a big difference.

Respondents indicate that teaming necessitates involvement in decisionmaking. Teachers are given a group of students, a few guidelines and financial facts, and are told to "make the decisions." As one teacher stated, "That's an enormous input to have. We determine 90% of what happens. We've had guidance and leadership. But what it comes down to is--How do we want it? What are our needs and expectations?"

Furthermore, teaming gives teachers the opportunity to be involved in decisions beyond the confines of their classrooms. Once they share responsibility within their team, the direction they choose to take is based on the input of the other team members. All team members share in an open-ended process in which they are "given latitude to develop their own schedules and programs." As individual teachers have the opportunity to affect school-level policies through their teams, they develop more confidence in their ability to make a difference.

Support for restructuring efforts

Coupled with the importance of having a structure, such as teaming, within which to promote teacher involvement in decisionmaking is the need for a strong supportive faculty and administration. Respondents indicate that leadership and peer support are imperative if school-improvement efforts are to succeed. When asked about the importance of leadership, one teacher responded: "Leadership is important in setting attitudes about how teachers feel about coming to work. A good leader makes people want to follow; he doesn't demand it. If you demand it, teachers only do it because they have to." As one administrator put it "There are times when you need to give up ownership and leadership, but the results are increased ownership and leadership. There are times when you step back and let the teachers take charge, and there are times when the principal must take charge and refocus the efforts."

Whereas some teachers attribute increased teacher involvement in decisionmaking to the trust and leadership fostered by the administrative team, others attribute the increase to the "overall readiness of the staff for change"--indicating that the current administration merely serves as a catalyst.

Regardless of who is viewed as the change agent, most respondents emphasize the importance of recognition, trust, and support from their peers and administrative staff. One teacher summed up this feeling: "I think our principal had really good material to work with, and of course I don't think you can have a

great school without great teachers by any means...but being allowed to be great is something else altogether."

According to those interviewed, "being allowed to be great" can be accomplished in a number of ways--by simply being open-minded and taking suggestions from those who are most affected by the decisions, by creating positions of leadership to help people develop their strengths, and by giving more responsibility to those who have chosen to be less involved in the school program.

To be sure, some respondents indicate that they feel effective and autonomous in their classrooms in spite of the lack of support they receive from their administrators or peers. They forego, however, the opportunity to participate in the wider school program.

Summary

Perhaps the most important results of our initial data analysis center on the relationship among efficacy, empowerment, and teaming. In general, those who feel the most empowered also feel the most efficacious. And that relationship is strongest in the middle schools, where interdisciplinary teams are well established.

As some teachers suggested in the interviews, teaming almost forces shared decisionmaking, giving teachers both control and responsibility for decisions. And, according to a few respondents, once teachers are empowered and have experience making decisions about events outside their classrooms, it becomes impossible to return to the "old ways." Thus, teaming is

conducive to increased professionalization of teaching, a direction compatible both with the goals of the professional development schools and with collaboration on teacher education between schools and universities.

Despite the fact that typically many teachers equate professionalism with individual, personal autonomy; our data suggest a rather different notion of professionalism. It is through group activities as embodied in teaming that a sense of empowerment and efficacy is enhanced.

IMPLICATIONS FOR SCHOOL-UNIVERSITY COLLABORATION

What are the implications of these quantitative and qualitative findings for school-university collaboration as a research strategy and as a reform strategy?

Research in a collaborative context

As we have shown, our research is embedded in a school/university collaborative context. Even when desired by both partners and generally working well, collaboration may conceal tensions and conflicting normative patterns. Schools are places of action and quick decisionmaking. By ten o'clock every day, school administrators and teachers have made more decisions that are of direct, immediate consequence to school children than most university researchers make in a month. University researchers, in contrast, value reflection and pondering, "mucking with data," and theorizing. Being in a university is like sitting around all day trying to decide what color to paint a room but never painting it, while being in a school is like painting one room

after another at a frantic pace but never getting to choose the color.

School-university collaboration, especially when it is symbiotic, is fragile (Schlechty and Whitford, 1988). As long as agendas are distinct and no one makes major blunders, all appears to be well. When agendas start to merge, however, this symbiotic relationship can become problematic. Research within a symbiotic relationship, such as in collaboration on teacher education, requires unusual sensitivity on the part of the researcher. In fact, to maintain the collaboration, the researcher is constrained in the questions asked and the analysis undertaken. The evaluative and judgmental conclusions of much traditional research would destroy the fragile partnership which ethnographic research attempts to foster.

This fostering results from several characteristics of ethnographic research. First, ethnographic research is inherently interesting to teachers and administrators because it chronicles their work. Second, it is easily accessed because the data are presented in narrative rather than numerical form. Third, by providing a picture of what goes on in the schools, it invites reflection and self-evaluation. Indeed, it encourages analysis of the data by the subjects themselves.

Moreover, an ethnographic stance alters the traditional relationships between university professors and school people, many of whom are enrolled in graduate education courses taught by these same faculty members. In that relationship, the professor

is typically "the expert," and the teachers and administrators are "the students." However, when doing field research, professors become researchers asking teachers and administrators about their knowledge and point of view about life in schools. In effect, the professor becomes the student and the teacher or administrator becomes the expert. Such a role reversal enhances collegiality both by valuing practitioner knowledge and by increasing the likelihood of research being seen as more relevant to school life. Ultimately, this should result in the conduct of more research that is relevant.

Reform in a collaborative context

Our research also suggests that teacher efficacy and empowerment are enhanced by a collaborative context--specifically, by teaming. Teacher education that continues to focus only on teachers' individual roles and responsibilities, as evidenced in the self-contained classroom where practice is rarely seen by other practitioners, will ultimately fail to support enhanced efficacy and empowerment. In short, teacher education reform and school reform are inextricably linked.

Teacher education can become more effective only as it is linked to efforts to alter school cultures and organizational patterns through increased collaboration. Thus, teacher preparation programs should include opportunities for neophytes to experience the collegiality, cooperation, and shared decisionmaking that are part of working on a team. And, teacher preparation programs should model the same teamwork through

strong collaboration with school-based colleagues. Our research indicates that an emphasis on teamwork is the surest path to the enhancement of efficacy and empowerment.

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